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The North Carolina Museum of History's Latest Exhibit Highlights the Tourism Industry—Opens April 30, 2021



For images, follow this [Dropbox link](#). Captions and credits are listed after exhibit descriptions.

April 10, 2021 (RALEIGH, N.C.)—The North Carolina Museum of History is excited to announce a new photography exhibit, *Are We There Yet? North Carolina's Variety Vacationland, 1930s-1970s*, opening to the public with [special hours and protocols](#) Friday, April 30! Admission is free, so come in and take a stroll through mid-century tourism.

This free exhibit takes a look back at an era when tourism boomed, thanks to largely a state-run marketing effort called “Variety Vacationland.” From the 1930s to the 1970s, the Variety Vacationland campaign successfully created a unified tourism industry in North Carolina by depicting the state as both modern and progressive, but with strong ties to its past. True to the Jim Crow era, however, most sites promoted were marketed—and accessible—only to White tourists; people of color were neglected and even exploited at times, an attitude this exhibit attempts to point out where possible.

“In this exhibit, I tried to highlight the nuances of the Variety Vacationland campaign,” says exhibit curator Katie Edwards, who is also the curator of popular culture at the Museum of History. “It was effective in that it *did* successfully bring tourism to the state, but it was a campaign that neglected to include all North Carolina’s citizens and tourists.”

Visitors will be able to learn about the origins of this campaign, view photographs of sites the campaign promoted (as well as some, for minority audiences, it did not), and take in media the produced for the campaign. *Did you know there was a Variety Vacationland jingle?* The exhibit also has an interactive where visitors are encouraged to submit their own favorite North Carolina vacation photos to [#NCVacationland](#).

[CLICK HERE FOR ALL EXPANDED IMAGES.](#) Image Descriptions and credits below:



Image: Governor Terry Sanford toured North Carolina with a Variety Vacationland trailer, promoting the state in the 1960s.

Credit: Courtesy State Archives of North Carolina



Image: WUNC-TV filmed a television program for Variety Vacationland; this episode was shot in 1955.

Credit: Courtesy State Archives of North Carolina



Image: Cape Hatteras Lighthouse, the country's tallest lighthouse (pictured here ca. 1950s), was designated to become the first national seashore in 1937.

Credit: Courtesy North Carolina Museum of History



Image: Visitors enjoy the Albemarle Potato Festival (now the North Carolina Potato Festival) in Elizabeth City (Pasquotank County), 1952.

Credit: Courtesy State Archives of North Carolina



Image: Tryon Palace in New Bern (Craven County) was the home of North Carolina's royal governor and a seat of colonial government. The complex was rebuilt, restored, and reopened with docents (pictured here in 1959), who dressed in colonial costumes to guide tourists throughout the interiors and gardens.

Credit: Courtesy North Carolina Museum of History



Image: Onlookers watch the USS *North Carolina* arrive at its new permanent home in Wilmington on October 2, 1961. After serving in World War II, the *North Carolina* was decommissioned, then designated for scrap. A Save Our Ship (SOS) campaign successfully raised funds to save the battleship and move it to Wilmington.

Credit: Courtesy North Carolina Museum of History



Image: Man fishing at Hammocks Beach State Park in 1970, near Swansboro (Onslow County). Hammocks Beach was one of the few beaches accessible to people of color in the 1950s and early 1960s.

Credit: Courtesy North Carolina State Parks



Image: Children play in the waters of Jones Lake State Park (Bladen County), ca. 1950. It was the first state park open to people of color.

Credit: Courtesy North Carolina State Parks



Image: Tom Haywood created this kicking machine, which was a fun and popular roadside attraction located in Croatan.

Credit: Courtesy North Carolina Museum of History



Image: Beginning in 1947, the Azalea Festival in Wilmington was one of North Carolina's most popular events, with a parade, beauty pageant, and celebration of all things azalea! North Carolina native, and Hollywood actor, Andy Griffith served as emcee for the festival in 1958.

Credit: Courtesy North Carolina Museum of History



Image: Young students visit the Hall of History, ca. 1940s. The hall officially became the North Carolina Museum of History in 1965.

Credit: Courtesy State Archives of North Carolina



Image: Family camping at Crabtree Creek State Park, ca. 1950s. The park would eventually be united with Reedy Creek State Park, an area designated for African Americans, under the name William B. Umstead State Park.

Credit: Courtesy North Carolina State Parks



Image: Visitors enjoy the swim area of Reedy Creek State Park, ca. 1950s. The park would eventually be united with Crabtree Creek State Park, an all-White area, in the 1960s under the name William B. Umstead State Park.

Credit: Courtesy North Carolina State Parks



Image: Children enjoying a ride, North Carolina State Fair, Raleigh, 1962.

Credit: Courtesy North Carolina Museum of History



Image: The outdoor drama *Unto These Hills* premiered on July 1, 1950 in Cherokee. It depicted the Trail of Tears, the 1838 removal of Cherokee people from their native land.

Credit: Courtesy State Archives of North Carolina



Image: Festival attendees having fun at Hendersonville's Apple Blossom Festival, 1947.

Credit: Courtesy State Archives of North Carolina



Image: Lake Lure not only provided *water* recreation—but *land* fun, as well, proven by this vacationer skiing on wheels towed by an automobile, ca. 1940s.

Credit: Courtesy North Carolina State Parks



Image: A group of visitors tests the winds at the Blowing Rock, which was advertised as “North Carolina’s Oldest Travel Attraction,” 1947.

Credit: Courtesy State Archives of North Carolina

For information about the NC Museum of History, a Smithsonian Affiliate museum, call 919-814-7000 or access ncmuseumofhistory.org or follow the museum on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), or [YouTube](#).

About the NC Museum of History

The North Carolina Museum of History, a Smithsonian Affiliate, fosters a passion for North Carolina history. This museum collects and preserves artifacts of state history and educates the public on the history of the state and the nation through exhibits and educational programs. **Admission is free.** Last year, more than 465,000 people visited the museum to see some of the 150,000 artifacts in the museum collection. The Museum of History, within the Division of State History Museums, is part of the NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources.

About the Smithsonian Affiliations Network

Since 2006, the North Carolina Museum of History has been a Smithsonian Affiliate, part of a select group of museums, cultural, educational, and arts organizations that share Smithsonian resources with the nation. The Smithsonian Affiliations network is a national outreach program that develops long-term collaborative partnerships with museums, educational, and cultural organizations to enrich communities with Smithsonian resources. More information is available at affiliations.si.edu.

About the NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources

The North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources (NCDNCR) is the state agency with a vision to be the leader in using the state’s natural and cultural resources to build the social, cultural, educational, and economic future of North Carolina. NCDNCR’s mission is to improve the quality of life in our state by creating opportunities to experience excellence in the arts, history, libraries, and natural assets in North Carolina by stimulating learning, inspiring creativity, preserving the state’s history, conserving the state’s natural heritage, encouraging recreation and cultural tourism, and promoting economic development.

NCDNCR includes 27 historic sites, seven history museums, two art museums, two science museums, three aquariums, and Jennette’s Pier, as well as 39 state parks and recreation areas, the North Carolina Zoo, the nation’s first state-supported symphonic orchestra, the State Library of North Carolina, the State Archives of North Carolina, the North Carolina Arts Council, the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, and the North Carolina Office of State Archaeology, along with the state Division of Land and Water Stewardship. For more information, call 919-814-6800 or visit DNCR.nc.gov.